

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9510

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ/J-2

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 1449

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, BL

SUBJ: GOB RELEASES LAST REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: (A) 77 LA PAZ 10199, (B) LA PAZ 0509,

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. AS INDICATED REF A GOB ANNOUNCED ON DECEMBER 21, 1977 THAT
33 OF THE 52 POLITICAL PRISONERS THEN BEING HELD IN CUSTODY WOULD
BE RELEASED AND THE OTHER 19 REMANDED FOR TRIAL.

2. DURING JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY 1978 GOB QUIETLY
RELEASED ANOTHER SEVEN OF THE 19 PRISONERS BEING HELD FOR
TRIAL.

3. THEN ON FEBRUARY 13 AND 14, 1978, THE BOLIVIAN COURTS ORDERED
THE RELEASE OF THE REMAINING 12 PRISONERS, BASICALLY ON THE GROUNDS
THAT THE CRIMES FOR WHICH THEY WERE TO BE TRIED WERE POLITICAL
CRIMES ENCOMPASSED BY THE TERMS OF THE JANUARY 18, 1978
POLITICAL AMNESTY (REF B). END UNCLASSIFIED
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4. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE COURT DECISION TO
RELEASE THE REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS WAS MADE
WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF PRESIDENT BANZER IN ORDER TO
DEFUSE ANOTHER POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING ISSUE (SEE LA PAZ

0733 FOR GOB DECISION TO RESTORE TRADE UNION FREEDOMS).
DEFENSE LAWYERS WERE PREPARED TO ACCUSE GOB OF GROSS
MALTREATMENT OF THEIR CLIENTS, INCLUDING DEMONSTRATING TO THE
COURT DURING THE TRIAL/PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF TORTURE AND BEATINGS
SUFFERED BY THE PRISONERS DURING THEIR YEARS (IN SOME CASES)
OF IMPRISONMENT. IN ADDITION, FORMER PRESIDENT LUIS ADOLFO
SILES SALINAS, A POSSIBLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE IN THE JULY
ELECTIONS, WAS COLLABORATING WITH THE DEFENSE TEAM AND MIGHT HAVE
TRIED TO USE THE TRIAL TO BOOST HIS OWN POLITICAL PROSPECTS.

5. FATHER JULIO TUMIRI, PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS, TOLD EMBOFF FEBRUARY 16, 1978
THAT GOB IS COMPLYING FULLY WITH TERMS OF JANUARY 18 AGREEMENT
ENDING HUNGER STRIKE. IN HIS VIEW, WITH RELEASE OF REMAINING
POLITICAL PRISONERS, THERE ARE NOW NO SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS
PROBLEMS IN BOLIVIA.
BOEKER

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NNN

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